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General

Maldives, lying about 400 miles SW of Sri Lanka (Ceylon), consists of a chain of 19 atolls formed by about 2,000 low, coral islets. This chain extends N for about 470 miles from **Addu Atoll** (0°35'S., 73°05'E.). Only about 200 of the larger coral islets are inhabited.

The islets are seldom more than 2m high, so that the coconut palms standing on them appear, on first approach, to be growing out of the water.

The climate is tropical, being mostly hot and humid. There is a dry Northeast Monsoon, from November to March, and a rainy Southwest Monsoon, from June to August.

Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region A) is in effect. See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

Cautions

Fishing

Fishing with traps, handlines, and trolling gillnets is carried out in the vicinity of the atolls.

Buoyage

It is reported that many lighted beacons, of limited range, have been erected on the reefs and atolls for the use of local fishermen.

Currency

The official unit of currency is the rufiyaa (Maldivian rupee), consisting of 100 laari. It is reported that Sri Lankan currency is also used.

Government

Maldives, which received independence from the United Kingdom in 1965, became a republic in 1968. The head of state is the President, who is elected by the Citizens' Majlis and assisted by the Ministers' Majlis (Cabinet). The Citizens' Majlis (House of Representatives) consists of 48 members, 40 directly elected for 5-year terms and 8 nominated by the President.

Maldives is divided into the Capital and 19 other administrative districts (atolls), each under an appointed Governor assisted by appointed local Chiefs.

The legal system is based on Islamic law with elements of English common law primarily in commercial matters.

The capital is **Male** (4°10'N., 73°30'E.), which stands on one of the islands of North Male Atoll.



**Flag of Maldives**

## Holidays

The following holiday is observed:

Independence Day	July 26
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In addition, numerous religious festivals, the dates of which vary from year to year depending on the appearance of the moon, are celebrated.

## Industries

The major agricultural crops include coconuts, sugar cane, corn, cassava, onions, chillies, and sweet potatoes. Other industries are food processing, boat building, tourism, handicrafts, coral and sand mining, woven mats, and fishing.

It is reported that the former military (UK) airstrip on Addu Atoll has been converted by the Maldivian government for commercial use.

## Languages

The official languages is Maldivian Divehi. English is used by most government officials.

## Regulations

Foreign warships shall not enter the territorial waters of Maldives without prior permission from the authorities.

## Time Zone

The Time Zone description is ECHO (-5). Daylight Savings Time is not observed.

### World Time Zone Chart

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/ref/pdf/802801.pdf>

## U.S. Embassy

There is no diplomatic representative in Maldives.

All matters are referred through the U.S. Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

### U. S. Embassy Sri Lanka Home Page

<http://usembassy.state.gov/srilanka>